

# The Relation of the Federal Government to Metropolitan Areas

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ONE of the Nation's major domestic problems that has received much less attention than it deserves is the relation of the Federal Government to metropolitan areas.

Few would argue with the basic premise that the primary responsibility for solving the problems of metropolitan areas lies with local and State governments. Under our constitutional system, no other assignment is possible. On the other hand, few will disagree with the assertion that the very size and nature of the problem, if nothing else, make it a national issue, demanding national action.

## Nature of the Metropolitan Problem

Before the Federal Government's role can be delineated, there must be some clear thinking about the implications of metropolitan life in the United States today and the nature of the problem this new way of life has created. More and more of the Nation's population is living in urban areas. This fact has been repeated until it has become almost trite. The metropolitan problem in one sense is a compound of urban problems. But it is more than that. Luther Gulick has recently described it as the discontent of millions of human beings, dissatisfied with life in the great cities.

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*This paper is based on an address presented by Dr. Connery at a conference called by the Washington Center for Metropolitan Studies. Dr. Connery, professor of political science at Duke University, Durham, N.C., is joint author with Richard H. Leach of "The Federal Government and Metropolitan Areas," published in March 1960 by the Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass.*

"People are not satisfied with their homes and housing, with their trips to and from work, and with the aggravations, costs and delays of traffic and parking. They are distraught by the lack of schools and recreational facilities for their children and themselves, and they are concerned by social pressures, neighborhood conditions, youthful delinquency, and crime. People find shopping difficult and more regimented, and the evermore needed services hard to get and expensive. They struggle with water shortages, with bad drainage and sewer conditions, with dirt and noise. . . . They find the city centers 'old style,' inconvenient, dismal and repulsive, and the old buses, streetcars, trains, and other methods of mass movement uncomfortable and slow. . . . And when people move to the suburbs and take work in a new suburban factory, store, or other enterprise, they find that many of the evils they sought to escape move in right after them, with mounting taxes to plague them there too" (1).

In part, the metropolitan problem is a psychological problem. The ties that bind the metropolitan community are not those that bound the typical rural community of the last century. Though there often is a certain degree of neighborhood consciousness, and even of loyalty to an individual city in the metropolitan complex, there is no loyalty to the metropolitan area as a whole. In a real sense, when one speaks about metropolitan areas, the line of Gertrude Stein, "There is no there there," applies. Ever since the days of ancient Greece, man's first loyalties have been to his city, and this tradition still prevails in our own culture. Thus the achievement of a solution to metropolitan living is handicapped by the fact that

the metropolitan area is not even a symbol which attracts men. There still is no awareness of the larger community in the minds of residents of metropolitan areas. Almost by definition, the area is composed of a mosaic of conflicting and overlapping jurisdictions.

The metropolitan problem is also one of urban economics. The past decade has witnessed unprecedented demands for housing, schools, highways, streets, hospitals, parks, modern commercial and industrial facilities, and all the amenities that go with community life in the second half of the 20th century. These demands will continue and in all probability will become even greater. The tremendous increases in productivity in the American economy and the steady uptrend of the American standard of living will undoubtedly result in a steadily increasing need for community services. These new pressures come at a time when governments in metropolitan centers have still not solved the problems created by today's population. Millions of American city dwellers live in substandard housing. Schools are overcrowded. Traffic is congested. There is a large backlog of need for modern water and sewage treatment facilities. In the face of all this, there is hardly a city in the Nation that has the economic resources to solve its present problems, let alone those just over the horizon.

#### **State Limitations**

Every State, of course, has the power to bring at least some order out of jurisdictional chaos and thus to facilitate an attack on problems in its own metropolitan areas. Nor is there any way by which States can escape their responsibility for their failure to act. By and large, State legislators and State executive officers are more oriented toward the rural voter and thus more representative of rural interests and more concerned about rural problems than they are of urban voters and about urban interests. Thus they either fail to see the need for action in the first place, or tend to give urban problems short shrift when they are finally brought to their attention. In part, the States have been slow to act on the metropolitan problem because the problem is not a monolithic one. Probably, very often, State legislatures have been faced with a wide divergence of metro-

politan opinions about what should be done. Until representatives in the legislatures from these areas can come to terms on the approaches to be taken, it is futile to expect the rest of the State legislature to act for them.

#### *Interstate Metropolitan Areas*

The most important reason why the States cannot act, however, is that many metropolitan areas are not within the jurisdiction of any single State. According to the 1950 census, 23 standard metropolitan areas extended across State boundary lines and another 28 bordered on a State line. Inevitably many of these will expand across State lines. Even in 1950, the population of the 23 areas which then crossed State lines amounted to almost 33 million, and of that number, more than one-fifth lived in a different State from the one in which the core city of the area was situated. The six largest accounted for more than one-sixth of the total population of the United States, and the areas bordering on a State line accounted for almost another 10 million people. Thus a total of some 43 million people lived in such areas, or more than one out of every four people in the entire Nation. The proportion is even higher today. Speculating on the implications of these facts, Daniel R. Grant concluded that "with the bulk of our population increase presently taking place in the suburban fringes of metropolitan areas, there may well be more people living in interstate metropolitan areas than in intrastate cities of all sizes within the next generation or so" (2). Thus the interstate area is rapidly becoming the pattern for urban living.

#### *International Metropolitan Communities*

A number of important metropolitan communities lie athwart international boundaries. The Detroit-Windsor and Buffalo areas on the Canadian border and the El Paso area on the Mexican border are well-developed metropolitan areas. The entire Rio Grande Valley, the San Diego area, and the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence region give promise of rapid urban development. Already sewage disposal, water supply, smoke abatement, water levels for navigation, and restrictions on truck transportation demand attention and solution.

From their very nature, it is obvious that problems such as these that affect metropolitan areas on our national boundaries cannot be handled either by the communities themselves or fully by the States. And the international commissions created by the Federal Government long ago to settle disputes in boundary areas are limited in scope and operate as adjuncts to its conduct of foreign affairs. Since then, border communities have grown greatly, and they promise to develop even more in the years ahead.

Neither the State Department nor the international commissions were intended to deal with the complex problems that these great metropolitan areas present. Though it goes without saying that on all matters of foreign relations the Federal Government properly occupies the center of the stage, and that any solution to the problems of government in metropolitan areas along our national borders must take place within that context, it cannot be emphasized too strongly that the Nation has not yet faced up to the facts of the situation.

### **Problems of National Dimensions**

Although the primary responsibility for solving the metropolitan area problem rests with the States and their local subdivisions, it is nevertheless true that by now the solution, not only for interstate and international metropolitan areas but for those within single States as well, has become too important to be put entirely on the shoulders of only one of the partners in the Federal system. This new pattern of settlement is a national phenomenon and as such necessarily involves the other partner, the Federal Government, in its accommodation. Not that the entire problem of adjustment should simply be transferred to Washington: it cannot and should not be. But neither can the Federal Government be indifferent to the fate of nearly two-thirds of the Nation's population in metropolitan areas. After all, as Mayor Richard J. Daley of Chicago pointed out recently, metropolitan area problems concern the Federal Government because they concern people. "The Federal Government is concerned with people," and the bulk of those people "are in cities all over America" (3).

More than anything else, however, Federal action is demanded by the nature of the needs. Far from being matters of merely local or even regional concern, the most vital needs of metropolitan areas are of utmost concern to our national defense, to the conservation of natural resources, and to the maintenance of national health and welfare. They are problems of national dimensions, affecting the lives of all Americans, no matter where they live. So closely knit is our economic and industrial system today that what strikes at the metropolitan nerve centers of the Nation is felt throughout the country.

### *Defense Considerations*

In event of the involvement of the United States in another major conflict, metropolitan mass transit, without substantial assistance, could not absorb the added burden. Probably no problem is more readily apparent in most metropolitan areas than the inability to handle present-day traffic, to say nothing of future transportation requirements. Central cities in many metropolitan areas are ghost towns from 5 p.m. to 7 a.m. Workers flock to the suburbs after work—the "dormitory suburbs" they have been called—only to flock back again the next morning. Mass transit facilities are employed to accommodate the flood twice a day, yet are expected to remain idle and unused the rest of the time.

The mass transit problem is only one part of the Nation's transportation problem, and it cannot be solved by itself. As Senator Case has recently pointed out, the Federal Government, in its regulation of railroads, cannot overlook its responsibility to the commuter (4). Though some parts of the problem are susceptible to State and local action, many metropolitan communities feel no solution can be found without the active participation of the Federal Government. Annoying as this whole situation is to everyday peacetime living, it is a matter of vital concern in considering the Nation's defense.

The highway problem is equally serious, and here defense considerations have elicited Federal action. The House Subcommittee on Public Roads, commenting in 1956 on the expanded national system of interstate high-

ways, noted that the system "constitutes only 1.2 percent of total United States road mileage, but when completed . . . it may be expected to carry 20 percent of the Nation's total traffic load" (5). The importance of that system to defense is obvious. But defense is not the only consideration. The country urgently needs also to reduce the appalling toll of deaths and injuries from traffic accidents.

### *Public Health Requirements*

Almost every metropolitan area suffers to some degree from lack of a sufficient supply of water. The rivers which supply many of the Nation's most important metropolitan areas are interstate or international. Every survey made in recent years of national water resources indicates that their most efficient development lies in comprehensive planning of an entire river system for many purposes (6). Such planning is complex; it must include more than the local governments concerned, more than the States involved. For "it is the people that a Nation's water resources policy must be designed to serve." "A well-rounded national water resources policy . . . must be a broad reflection of the lives of the people on their farms, in their villages and cities, in their regions, and in the Nation as a whole" (7).

Water pollution is closely related to the problem of water supply. "Pollution can be just as effective in reducing a water resource for use as drought. Pollution control, therefore, is now recognized as a key to the national problem of water conservation" (8). The expansion of population and industry in the Nation's metropolitan areas has been one of the prime causes for the tremendous increase in the amount of sewage and industrial waste dumped into the Nation's water in the past 30 years.

Sewers and sewage disposal plants were largely designed for and confined to the central cities when they were originally constructed. As population expanded into the suburban fringes of those cities after 1920, vast problems of waste collection and sewage disposal arose as the result of the lower suburban density of population and of the unequal distribution of taxable property among the suburbs, as well as of the inadequate coordination

which results from the maze of overlapping governmental jurisdictions characteristic of metropolitan areas. Even today, sewage and waste disposal plants are provided independently by municipalities and industries on a small-scale and uneconomic basis. As a result, the raw sewage equivalent dumped into American streams and rivers has increased almost 50 percent since 1920, and industrial wastes have increased more than 100 percent in the same period (8). On the basis of such evidence, the Kestnbaum Commission concluded that stream pollution is "one of the Nation's most serious public health problems" (9).

The House Committee on Public Works estimated in 1955 that municipal pollution abatement needs for the next 10 years, if met, would cost \$5.33 billion, and that another \$5.5 billion would be required for the construction of adequate new sewerage systems in the same period (8). The fact that many of the rivers and streams involved are navigable streams already under Federal jurisdiction, and the number of instances in which the waste from cities and industries in one State pollutes the waters of another State, led the Kestnbaum Commission on Intergovernmental Relations to recommend "increased participation of the National Government in coping with this hazard to domestic and industrial water users."

Slum clearance and urban renewal, as has already been pointed out, is another metropolitan area problem of obvious importance to national health.

Although air pollution is a relatively new metropolitan problem, it has already assumed alarming proportions. The effects of polluted air are not confined to the air over the metropolitan area from which it originates, nor indeed to the boundaries of any area or State. Polluted air moves wherever the winds carry it, with the result that air pollution is fast becoming a menace to the safety and comfort of people in many areas and in widely separated parts of the country. Nor are its effects interstate alone; they are even international.

### **Cooperative Federalism**

The list of metropolitan area problems could be expanded much further, and in each case need for the assumption of Federal responsibility

ity could be demonstrated. The need is not for the Federal Government to take over the entire metropolitan area problem, lock, stock, and barrel. Democracy must of necessity avoid concentration of all powers of the state in one organ. The need is rather for the Federal Government to recognize and accept its share of responsibility on the one hand and on the other hand to devise a coherent and comprehensive policy, within the framework of the Federal system, to guide its future action.

Such a course of action should be one of co-operative federalism, a principle which has long been accepted in the United States. Agriculture is one of the fields where the principle in operation has yielded bountiful results. But although it has been applied piecemeal in the solution of many urban problems, the metropolitan problem has not been approached as a whole, nor have the responsibilities of the Federal Government been frankly recognized. Given a true understanding of the nature of modern American federalism, the National Government can provide leadership, research, and incentives which will give metropolitan areas, with their huge populations, their dynamic economics, their world influence and social importance, a greater share of its attention than they so far have been accorded.

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## Symposium on Genetics and Oral Health

Hereditary factors have long been associated with oral malformations and diseases, but exploration of specific relationships has been limited. To further such study, the Council on Dental Research of the American Dental Association and the National Institute of Dental Research, Public Health Service, conducted a symposium on April 3-5, 1961, at Bethesda, Md.

Geneticists and dental investigators from the United States, Canada, Denmark, and Sweden exchanged information on current and proposed studies. Fifteen scientific papers on recent developments in medical genetics, heritable diseases of dental interest, and methods in genetics applicable to dental research were presented. The papers will be published in a single volume by the American Dental Association.